

The United States is a proud nation of immigrants. Like the generations who came before, the most recent newcomers want what all Americans want: to raise strong families, build safe communities, to practice their faith in freedom and to seek new and better opportunities for their children.

Residents of the 4th Congressional district are closely connected to this proud and historic immigrant tradition. Like their predecessors, today's immigrants work in the toughest jobs for the least amount of pay, contribute to the tax base, open small businesses that create jobs, serve in the U.S. military and add to the unique diversity of America through their social and cultural contributions. It is no wonder that our community considers it a top priority to have an immigration system in place that is fair, preserves family unity, protects our neighborhoods and honors immigrants' significant contributions to our nation.



On December 15, 2009, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus joined almost 100 Members of Congress to introduce H.R. 4321, the [Comprehensive Immigration Reform for America's Security and Prosperity Act of 2009](#) (CIR ASAP Act). The bill is pro-families, pro-jobs, and pro-security. It has been endorsed by a diverse coalition of Members and organizations including labor and religious leaders, and received the backing of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, and members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Families are needlessly separated under the current immigration system and often must wait years -- and in many cases decades -- for loved ones to receive a visa to join them in the United States. The CIR ASAP Act rectifies this by reducing the backlog in family-based visas and ensuring that the children and spouses of legal immigrants, once vetted by the Department of Homeland Security, are immediately eligible to join their parent or spouse in the U.S.

CIR ASAP also addresses the plight of the estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants currently living on the margins of society. My bill creates a straight-forward program that requires undocumented immigrants to register with the U.S. government, pass a background check, pay a \$500 fine, pay taxes, and learn English and U.S. civics in order to earn legal status that places them on the path to permanent residence and eventual citizenship and full integration.

For individuals in immigration detention, the bill establishes basic standards that include access to medical care, telephones, prevention of multiple transfers, and protections for vulnerable populations such as women, children, families, the disabled, asylum seekers, and the mentally ill.

It's also important to point out that the CIR ASAP Act strengthens the economy and levels the playing field for all U.S. workers. When employers hire undocumented workers and knowingly circumvent fair wage and safe workplace standards, all workers suffer. By mandating the electronic employment verification of employees and reforming the process by which visa holders enter the country to work, the CIR ASAP bill will ensure that employers hire legal workers and abide by labor standards. My bill also creates a new Commission on Labor Markets and Immigration, which will establish employment-based immigration policies that promote America's economic growth and competitiveness while minimizing job displacement, wage depression, and unauthorized employment in the United States. Those who come to the United States to fill legitimate gaps in our workforce will have improved and timely access to green cards, which will facilitate their integration into the mainstream and better protect their rights in the workplace, which will improve conditions for all workers.

My bill also strengthens border security by channeling traffic through regulated ports of entry and strengthening security at the border itself. The CIR ASAP Act secures ports of entry to combat violent criminal activity, human trafficking, and weapons smuggling. The bill also requires the Department of Homeland Security to conduct a review of personnel resources and fill any gaps that are identified over a 5-year period. In addition to increased technology, manpower, and resources to combat drug, arms, and human smuggling, the bill includes provisions to enhance international collaboration with border nations.

 [CIR ASAP Act Summary \(H.R. 4321\)](#)

